

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the application of: Derek Ian Joseph HOPKINS

Serial No.: 09/237,466

Filed: January 26, 1999

For: ANALYSING TACTICAL DATA LINK
MESSAGES

Attorney Docket No.: FHW-037

Group Art Unit: 2745

Examiner:

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By:

Anthony A. Laurentano
Anthony A. Laurentano
Reg. No. 38,230
Attorney for Applicant

**TRANSMITTAL LETTER AND CLAIM FOR
CONVENTION PRIORITY**

Dear Sir:

Pursuant to 35 USC § 119, Applicant requests and claims the benefit of the filing date of the prior foreign application, Great Britain Application No. 9801669.4. A certified copy of this application is enclosed in support of this claim.

TC 2700 MAIL ROOM

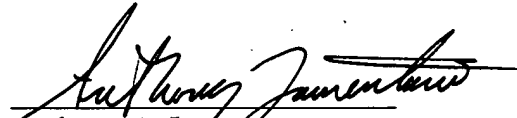
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No costs are believed due in connection with the filing of this priority document. However, if there are any associated costs, please charge them to our Deposit Order Account No. 12-0080. We enclose a duplicate of this letter for that purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

LAHIVE & COCKFIELD, LLP



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Date: April 12, 1999



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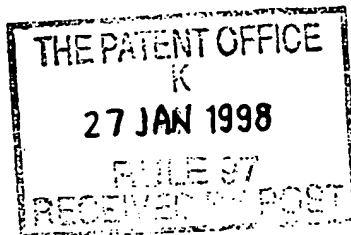
Dated

-1 APR 1999

**CERTIFIED COPY OF
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Request for grant of a patent

(See the notes on the back of this form. You can also get an explanatory leaflet from the Patent Office to help you fill in this form)



The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
Newport
Gwent NP9 1RH

1. Your reference

P57228D

2. Patent application number

(The Patent Office will fill in this part)

9801669.43. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (*underline all surnames*)

Stasys Limited
The Granary
1 Waverley Lane
Farnham
Surrey GU9 8BB

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*)

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

Great Britain

07366537001

4. Title of the invention

Analysing Tactical Data Link Messages

5. Name of your agent (*if you have one*)

Fry Heath & Spence

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (*including the postcode*)

The Old College
53 High Street
Horley
Surrey
RH6 7BN

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*)

05880273001 /

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (*if you know it*) the or each application number.

Country

Priority application number
(*if you know it*)

Date of filing
(*day / month / year*)

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application

Date of filing
(*day / month / year*)

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (*Answer 'Yes' if:*

Yes

- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
 - b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
 - c) any named applicant is a corporate body.
- See note (d))

Patents Form 7/77

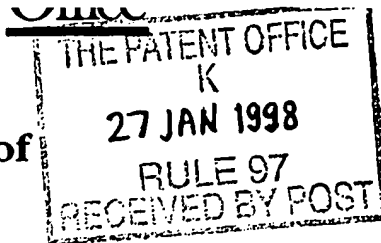
Enter the full names, addresses and postcodes of the inventors in the boxes and underline the surnames

Hopkins, Derek Ian Joseph
6 Foxhurst Road
Ash Vale
Aldershot
Hants
GU12 5DY

Patents ADP number (if you know it): 07366545001

Patents ADP number (if you know it):

Reminder



Statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
Newport
Gwent NP9 1RH

1. Your reference

P57228D

2. Patent application number
(if you know it)

9801669.4

3. Full name of the or of each applicant

Stasys Limited

4. Title of the invention

Analysing Tactical Data Link Messages

5. State how the applicant(s) derived the right
from the inventor(s) to be granted a patent

By virtue of employment

6. How many, if any, additional Patents Forms
7/77 are attached to this form?
(see note (c))

7. I/We believe that the person(s) named over the page (and on any extra copies of this form) is/are the inventor(s) of the invention which the above patent application relates to.

Signature

Date - 26/01/98

8. Name and daytime telephone number of
person to contact in the United Kingdom

Mr M Downing - 01293 776880

Notes

- If you need help to fill in this form or you have any questions, please contact the Patent Office on 0645 500505.
- Write your answers in capital letters using black ink or you may type them.
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- When an application does not declare any priority, or declares priority from an earlier UK application, you must provide enough copies of this form so that the Patent Office can send one to each inventor who is not an applicant.
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Description

8

Claim(s)

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Abstract

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Drawing(s)

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Priority documents

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Translations of priority documents

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Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77)

1

Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77)

0

Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77)

0

Any other documents (please specify)

0

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Trj Heath Spencer

Date

26/01/98

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

Mr M Downing - 01293 776880

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ANALYSING TACTICAL DATA LINK MESSAGES

The present invention relates to a method of analysing data link messages. It is particularly useful for detecting interoperability conflicts between the various sources of such messages. In this application, the description is directed to the interpretation of tactical data link messages, but the principle of the invention can be applied to like messages.

Tactical data links operate by exchanging messages between military units such as aircraft, ships, ground stations etc, which are synchronised in a radio network. Messages are transmitted in a digital form and consist of a stream of data bits formatted according to certain rules. These rules lay down that messages have a fixed format dependent on their message type. Different message types are intended to contain different information. For example, a track message will contain position and velocity information of (for example) an aircraft, whilst a status message will contain fuel data and weapons status of the aircraft. At present, approximately fifty different types of messages are defined for each link.

The message types and formats for each type are set down according to NATO rules and in theory a platform conforming to those rules should therefore be able to communicate with any other platform which also follows those rules. In other words, the platforms are fully interoperable and can

communicate with each other satisfactorily. In practice, the rules are inevitably insufficiently comprehensive to cover every eventuality. There is therefore scope for variation between different platform implementations, and these variations typically lead to interoperability problems. For example, a receiving platform may require that an incoming message contains certain information whereas the transmitting platform for some reason does not include that information. This would result in the receiving platform discarding that message as it did not meet its processing rules.

Interoperability problems such as this can be discovered by comparing the different platform implementations with reference to their build specifications. However, the specifications themselves may be unclear and the procedure would in any case be lengthy and difficult. It is more usual for interoperability problems to be discovered during a trial when the messages are recorded and their contents matched against expected events in each platform.

The difficulty with this latter approach is that data is generated by tactical data links at a very high rate. It is normal to generate approximately 20 MB of data during a two hour flight by a single platform. This can be compressed for transmission, but for analysis will obviously need to be decompressed. A lengthy trial with a significant number of platforms will clearly generate a prima facie unmanageable volume of data.

It is however essential that interoperability problems are identified in order to allow their resolution. Such difficulties could significantly impair the effectiveness of armed forces in a conflict situation, the implications of which are clear.

At present, data is sorted chronologically and placed into a database. The sheer volume of data and the wide range of information that may be included within a specific message field due to the large number of message

formats means that direct inspection of the data is not physically possible on any significant scale. However, databases allow a user to present queries, which are essentially filters to select those entries which meet certain criteria. Thus, a user can present the database with queries intended to illuminate interoperability conflicts.

The use of databases to analyse the data in this way has certain defects. It is immediately apparent to a user that the databases take a significant amount of time to analyse the data and respond to the query. Whilst this could in future be solved by applying ever greater processing power to the database, it would be useful to be able to accelerate the process. At present, the various stages necessary to convert the data into a form readable by the database, enter it into the database, select appropriate queries and obtain responses and analyse those responses means that, at best, results are available several days after the trial. It would be useful if those results were available at the post-trial debrief. As this is held a matter of hours after the trial end, whilst operators memories are still fresh, this is simply not practical at present.

Existing databases also suffer from a more fundamental flaw. It is up to the user to generate queries, and therefore this requires an a priori knowledge of the type of interoperability conflicts likely to arise. The user is not generally in a position to detect unexpected interoperability errors, as the raw data cannot feasibly be inspected and the processing time required rules out the use of a large number of speculative queries aimed at detecting unlikely or unsuspected conflicts. Speculative queries also require the user to have an intimate knowledge of the type of content in particular message fields, in order to detect unusual entries. This again cannot be guaranteed, and is clearly unlikely in the case of unsuspected conflicts.

The present invention seeks to provide a more intuitive analysis method for data link messages which is capable of providing speedier

analysis.

The present invention therefore provides a method of analysing data link messages, comprising the steps of:

- a) receiving a plurality of data link messages;
- b) assigning each data link message to one of a plurality of message groups such that each group contains data link messages of a specific message type;
- c) within a group,
 - (i) tabulating the messages so as to align corresponding fields;
 - (ii) displaying the tabulated data.

The processing is preferably applied to all groups, but may be applied to a single group if it is known that this is the source of problems.

It will clearly be preferable for a group to contain all data link messages of a specific message type.

For each field type, it is preferred to display a list of field contents within that type, filtered to remove repeated incidence of the same content. Thus, the user is presented simultaneously with a summary of the common entries for a particular field type and any spurious or unusual entries. For example, if an entry normally contained a number between 1 and 12, for example, this list would comprise a random scattering of numbers in this range. If it also included a value such as 87 or a text value then at least one platform within the trial is clearly transmitting an incompatible message. It is likely that that message has a different meaning or is for some reason erroneous. This type of analysis does not require the operator to be aware a priori of the likely message content.

It is further preferred to allow the group to be filtered so as to display

only messages having a particular content for that field type, the content having been selected from the list. This enables an immediate selection to be made of erroneous or unusual entries in the list, which will then highlight the message or messages containing that entry. This would then enable the user to identify the platform or platforms generating those messages and institute appropriate corrective action.

A small modification to the above which may on occasions be useful is for the lists to remove repeated incidence of content falling within a specified narrow range. This could be more useful for continuously variable data types. It could for example be applied to latitude or longitude data to identify messages being received from platforms in an incorrect theatre.

As mentioned above, it is particularly envisaged that the invention will be applied to tactical data link messages. However, the principle can be applied to other data links and the invention is not therefore limited in this respect.

Embodiments of the present invention will now be described by way of example, with reference to the accompanying Figures, in which:

Figure 1 shows the exchange of tactical data link messages;

Figure 2 shows the tactical data link messages arranged and displayed according to the present invention;

Figure 3 shows an arrangement similar to Figure 2 employing a commercially available programme; and

Figure 4 shows the data of Figure 3 being analysed.

Tactical data links operate by exchanging messages between units

(aircrafts, ships, ground stations) which are synchronised in a radio network. Several different links are implemented, and are known as Link x where x is a number, Link 11, Link 16 etc. The different links use different radio signals and different radio sets to transmit and receive information. The messages are transmitted in digital form, consisting of a stream of data bits formatted according to rules set out in the Link standard. For Links such as Link 16, the messages are transmitted at a high rate and contain information accurate to within a few seconds.

The messages are formatted as different types, each type having a fixed format and containing similar information. The different message types have completely different formats and contain different information. For example, the types may consist of a track message, which contains position and velocity of a track, and a status message which contains fuel and weapons status of an aircraft. Within the framework of Link 16, some 50 different types of message are defined.

Within the structure of Link 16, each platform is assigned time slots of 7.8 ms duration and transmits messages only in those slots (but not necessarily in all of them). Messages may be transmitted regularly at defined intervals, or as "one offs" resulting from some operator action. Messages can be one of about 50 different types, which correspond to different possibilities for information exchange. For Link 16, each message type has a unique designation as a two part number of the form x,y. Thus, there are 256 different designations possible, of which approximately 50 are used, as mentioned above. Each message may contain between about 50 and 300 bits of information. The message is split into a number of fields which contain information relevant to the use of that particular message. For example, a track message will contain fields for latitude, longitude, speed, aircraft type etc. The representation of each field is fixed for a particular message type, so that a message can be decoded if the structure is known and the message type received. Some examples of messages are

given below.

Number	Name	Use
J0.0	Initial Entry	Allows units to synchronise to the network
J2.2	Air PPLI	Transmitted by Link 16 equipped units to give precise positional and identification data
J3.2	Air Track	Transmitted by command and control units to disseminate track data on the network
J12.0	Mission Assignment	One-off message used to assign a tactical mission to a controlled unit
J13.0	Airfield Status	Gives weather and other information about airfields

By way of example, the list of fields for an Air PPLI message includes latitude, longitude, course, speed, height, relay status, airborne status, voice call sign and platform type.

All tactical data links and certain other types of data link such as buses that connect processors in some data processing systems have a similar message structure.

A recording of a tactical data link will contain all messages that have been transmitted by all units with a certain time frame. The recording contains message of different types, ordered chronologically. The analysis tool must decode messages into fields and sort them. In the past, using text-based analysis tools, the messages have been sorted chronologically.

Figure 1 illustrates tactical data links in progress, transferring messages 16, 18, 20 to and from a ground station 10 and operating aircraft 12, 14.

Figure 2 shows the manner in which data is ordered and structured

according to the present invention. Thus, messages are first sorted by message type and grouped accordingly. Within a message group, they can be sorted chronologically if desired. The messages are then tabulated such that each field is displayed in an aligned relationship to other fields.

Figure 3 shows the same data displayed by a commercially available programme, Microsoft Excel. Microsoft is a registered Trade Mark. Markers 50 indicate that a drop down menu can be selected, as shown in Figure 4, to reveal all the discrete values within that field. Anomalous values such as that illustrated at 52 are clearly highlighted. Selection of these values from the field results in the programme automatically applying a filter aimed at selecting that or those messages. These messages can then be inspected individually to trace the source platform.

It will be apparent that use of the analysis method set out above enables unusual or spurious entries to be detected very quickly. Messages such as the Air PPLI type include a total of forty fields, so it will therefore take only a matter of seconds to look through the individual filter results and identify spurious or unusual entries. The tabulated storage method is also very much less unwieldy than a database, and therefore can be filtered to reveal the erroneous message much more quickly. In tests, analysis results have been available in time for the post-exercise debrief, a matter of hours. This compares with the several days required to analyse the same data through the use of a database.

It will be appreciated that many variations could be made to the above described example without departing from the scope of the present invention.

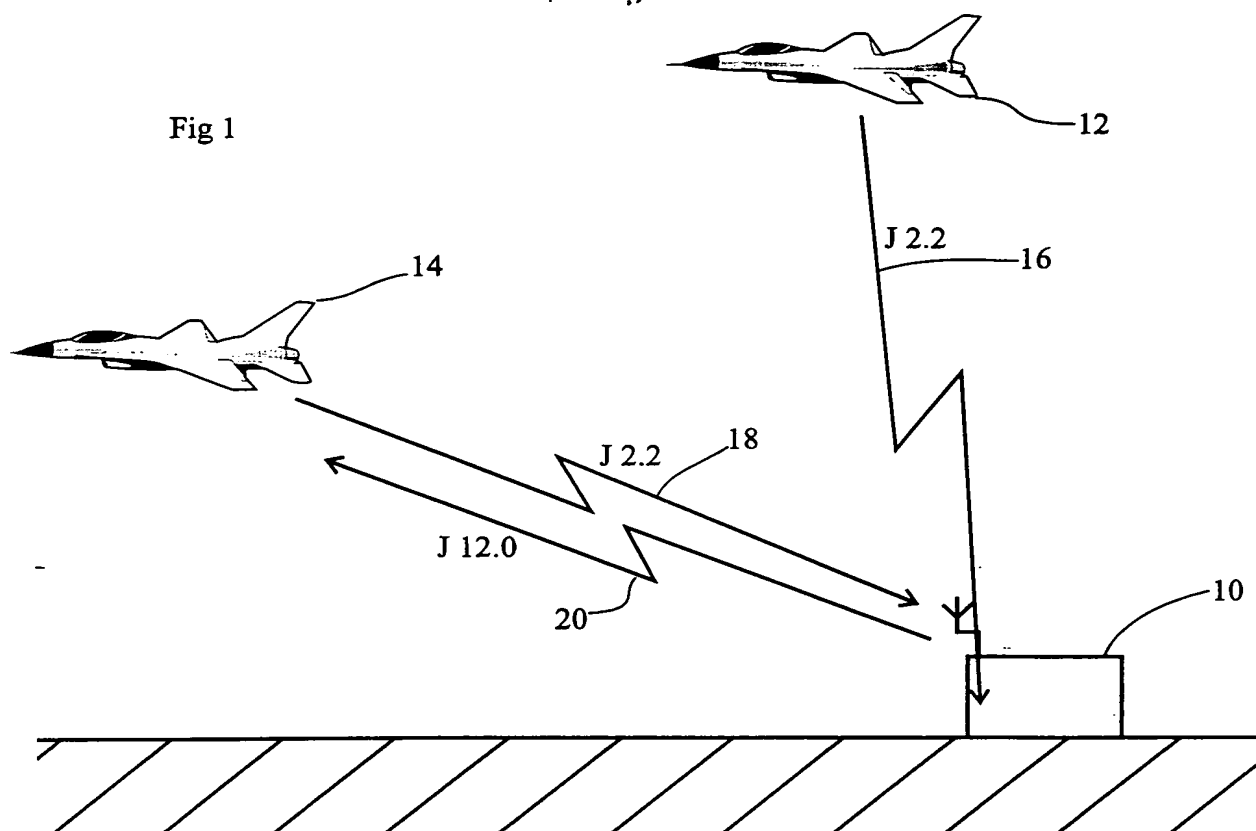
[illegible]

Fig 2

Microsoft Excel - AIRDATA.XLS										
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Data Window Help										
15 TX01										
Air PPLI										
Time	Latitude	Longitude	Course	Speed	Height	Relay	Airborne	Voice Call	Platform	
1						Status	Status	Sign	Type	
2	13:28:25	51.259	-0.707	25	515	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16	
3	13:28:37	51.27456	-0.69547	25	519	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16	
4	13:28:49	51.29024	-0.68385	25	502	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16	
5	13:29:01	51.30595	-0.67221	25	522	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16	
6	13:29:13	51.32172	-0.6053	26	522	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16	
7	13:29:25	51.33736	-0.64841	30	524	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16	
8	13:29:37	51.35248	-0.63453	31	526	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16	
9	13:29:49	51.36751	-0.62018	31	529	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16	

Fig 3

Microsoft Excel - AIRDATA.XLS										
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Data Window Help										
15 TX01										
Air PPL										
1	Time	Latitude	Longitude	Course	Speed	Height	Relay	Airborne	Voice Call	Platform
2							Status	Status	Sign	Type
3										
4										
5	13:28:25	51.259	-0.707	25	515	12015	Inactive	Airborne	TX01 (All)	
6	13:28:37	51.27456	-0.69547	25	519	12020	Inactive	Airborne	TX01 (Custom...)	
7	13:28:49	51.29024	-0.68385	25	502	12057	Inactive	Airborne	TX01 (Tornado)	
8	13:29:01	51.30595	-0.67221	25	522	12103	Inactive	Airborne	TX01 (Blanks)	
9	13:29:13	51.32172	-0.6053	26	522	12116	Inactive	Airborne	TX01 (NonBlanks)	
10	13:29:25	51.33736	-0.64841	30	524	12161	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16
11	13:29:37	51.35248	-0.63453	31	526	12210	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16
12	13:29:49	51.36751	-0.62018	31	529	12223	Inactive	Airborne	TX01	F-16

Fig 4